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REMARKS

ON

DR. ELLIOTSON'S STRICTURES

ON

SPURZHEIM.

BY HENRY HALEY HOLM.

1838

[*From the London Medical Gazette.*]

REMARKS, &c.

To the Editor of the Medical Gazette.

SIR,

THE spirit in which Dr. Graves has responded to the attack upon Spurzheim, made by Dr. Elliotson in his last edition of Blumenbach's Physiology, deserves the thanks of all lovers of truth. Allow me sir, also, through the medium of your useful journal, to reply to the unfair conclusions of the Professor. Speaking of Spurzheim's published opinions, he says, "In his fondness for changing his names, his arrangement, and the numbering of the organs, he introduced confusion without advancing knowledge. To prove Spurzheim's speculative spirit, I may mention that, instead of giving the origin of any of his asserted discoveries, as Gall did, and adding a host of examples, he tells us, in regard to the organ of inhabitiveness only, that a gentleman much attached to his house had a particular spot of his head much hotter than any other; and in regard to the organs of hope, marvellousness, conscientiousness, size, weight, order, time, he neither tells us how he discovered them, nor adduces a single proof."

Does Dr. Elliotson mean to insinuate that Spurzheim was not justified in modifying his opinions, as experience gave him further opportunities of perfecting them? and was not this the very principle by which the founder of phrenology, the illustrious Gall, arrived at such important physiological truths, and which our ever to be venerated countryman, Bacon, pointed out so distinctly?

If Spurzheim's opinions and observations had not advanced knowledge, surely Dr. Elliotson's intellectual endowment would have found no difficulty in exposing their weakness, had he been so inclined, by direct reference to his works, instead of attacking by insinuation the character of the dead! I would ask Dr. Elliotson if he has ever read or understood the 7th section of Spurzheim's Phrenology, 3rd edit. 1825? There would be found the reasons for Spurzheim changing the names of organs, and for differing from his preceptor,

Gall, without attempting to take from him a justly merited reputation as the discoverer of the physiology of the brain. This section being so long, I will only direct immediate attention to the following quotation from it, in order to shew Spurzheim's philosophical turn of mind as well as his candour:—

"In examining the fundamental powers of the mind and their organs, I shall always follow the same procedure. I shall first consider the individual actions, then give the history of the discovery of the organ, and add my remarks where Dr. Gall and I happen to differ in opinion. I shall describe the seat of each organ, and name it according to its essential function; and, finally, I shall examine its influence on the other faculties, and the effects of its inactivity. It is my intention rather to make known the philosophical spirit of these inquiries, and the manner in which I conceive they ought to be conducted, confirmed, or amended, than to quote the numerous facts I have observed. Dr. Gall is fond of quoting examples: these, be they ever so numerous, however, can never produce conviction. I have neither the wish nor the intention to persuade, and therefore invite every one to convince himself by personal examination. The few cases I mention, and the numerous instances brought forward by Dr. Gall, shew that we have observed; we have, therefore, acquired the right to demand that no conclusion be formed until our observations have been repeated. This is the only way of establishing new discoveries."

Thus may we see that Spurzheim's mode of following up the discoveries of Gall was different from what Dr. Elliotson seems to have wished. Spurzheim had a desire to look for truth, and the power also to find principles; his mind was too capacious to feel fully occupied with details, *though he never neglected them*, and he offered the results of his experience to direct others. Professor Whewell, in his Introduction to the History of the Inductive Sciences, makes some philo-

sophical observations on the "Successive Steps in Science," which so obviously apply to the progress of the sciences of geology and phrenology, that I cannot forbear quoting them:—

"But there is another remark which we must also make. Such sciences as we have here to do with are commonly not formed by one single act; they are not completed by the discovery of one great principle. On the contrary, they consist in a long-continued advance, a series of changes, a repeated progress from one principle to another, different and often apparently contradictory. Now it is important to remember that this contradiction is apparent only. The principles which constituted the triumph of the preceding stages of the science, may appear to be subverted and ejected by the later discoveries; but, in fact, they are (so far as they were true) taken up into the subsequent doctrines, and included in them. They continue to be an essential part of the science. The earlier truths are not expelled, but absorbed—not contradicted, but extended; and the history of each science, which may thus appear like a succession of revolutions, is, in reality, a series of developments. In the intellectual, as in the material, world—

"*Omnia mutantur, nil interit,
Nec manet ut fuerat nec formas servat easdem,
Sed tamen ipsa eadem est.*"

"All changes, nought is lost; the forms are changed,
And that which has been is not what it was;
Yet that which has been is."

"Nothing which has been done is useless or unessential, though it ceases to be conspicuous and primary.

"Thus the final form of each science contains the substance of each of its preceding modifications; and all that was at any antecedent period discovered and established, ministers to the ultimate development of its proper branch of knowledge. Such previous doctrines may require to be made precise and definite—to have their superfluous and arbitrary portions expunged—to be expressed in new language—to be taken up into the body of the science by various processes; but they do not on such accounts cease to be true doctrines, or to form a portion of the essential constituents of our knowledge."

I would fearlessly appeal to the members of scientific bodies in Great Britain, Ireland, France, and Germany, as

well as to the medical officers of our own charitable institutions, and to all who knew Spurzheim in public, for evidence of his candour and sound sense; and from personal knowledge, I may add, that for nearly four years his museum, at his house, in Gower Street, was publicly open once a week, where he attended, when in London, with a view to explain and illustrate all his opinions; and that he was at all times ready to give, to receive, and to appreciate any information for the elucidation of truth; as I was, during that period, constantly employed under his directions in dissections and observations upon the brain, and in collecting evidence from man in action, for the express purpose of proving his positions to such as chose to inquire. In common with his friends, too, I can bear testimony that Spurzheim was remarkable for his mildness, urbanity, and candour, as well as for his love for the science he had espoused, which terminated only with his life.

Though, at first, the magnitude and importance of the subject disposed many to doubt the truth of phrenology, still the greatest of all tests, Time, has not brought candid and sincere opposition to bear upon it; for the discoveries of Gall, as carried out by Spurzheim, and the principles deduced therefrom by the latter especially, are acknowledged to be correct in the main, by all who have investigated the subject with a view to find out truth. And of what value are the assertions on any subject, of those who neither profess knowledge nor wish for conviction? Had Spurzheim lived, nothing would have delighted him more than to see the interest now taken by the public in the science of his heart and the pursuit of his life. I have heard him repeat that he was not the first, nor would be the last, that was not generally understood during his life; that if man did not *die*, moral and intellectual improvement would be still more slow.

I would respectfully, but firmly, assure Dr. Elliotson, that his *fiat* certainly will not annihilate the labours of Spurzheim's whole life. The field of nature is broad enough for all her children to reap a plentiful harvest, without destroying each other's property in order to raise the value of the produce of individuals.

Another accusation of Dr. Elliotson's

is, "Spurzheim changed even the situation and extent of organs in his last plate. The space allotted by him to marvellousness was originally between imitation, mirthfulness, hope, and ideality; now it is more than twice its former size, and placed between these four and veneration; covetiveness (acquisitiveness) was placed by Gall, and admitted by Dr. Spurzheim, before cunning (secretness,) and between ideality and cautiousness."

Need I ask any honourably feeling or educated man, if acknowledgment of intellectual error be a crime? I would demand of Dr. Elliotson if he has not gained clearer and more extended views by further experience; or would he only deny that acquirement to others?

The phrenological-marked bust referred to by Dr. Elliotson is not intended to represent a real head, but only to give the student a familiar knowledge, and to facilitate his acquisition of the name, number, and general situation of the organs: these are represented on its surface as they might exist in some real head; but because in each individual there is more or less unevenness and irregularity of development, no abstract marking can, with exactness, be applicable to individuals. As each organ was at first discovered in the state of predominant development and activity (the lower propensities in criminals usually, and sometimes in the insane, the intellectual faculties and sentiments in geniuses and noble-minded characters) it would consequently, in each case, push aside the less well-marked neighbouring cerebral parts, and much time, therefore, elapsed before the usual relative size and situation of the cerebral organs could be at all determined. Each successive bust that was published, became, as the limits of the organs were more accurately defined, of more practical utility than the preceding; but no mere bust, that has been or ever will be published, can do more than indicate the general position of the several convolutions of the brain. Their actual situation is learned from observation of nature, which alone can give an acquaintance with the contour and external appearance communicated to each head by their relative development. It should also be clearly understood, that however differently Gall and Spurzheim might mark a plaster bust, they never disagreed respecting the *site*

of any organ in the head of a healthy individual. It is true, that Spurzheim confirmed eight, and acknowledged the existence of two more cerebral organs, making in all thirty-seven, after Gall had ceased, from age, to exert the brilliant intellect and extraordinary vigour of his youth. It must also be remembered, that Gall marked the positions of his organs by circular or isolated borders, and left many parts of the brain with undiscovered specific functions.

Spurzheim's mode of marking was much improved in the last years of his life, by attentively considering the course of the convolutions; in fact, the anatomical proofs of phrenology were mostly followed out by Spurzheim, both during the more than ten years Gall and he worked together in common, and the nearly twenty years after, that Spurzheim laboured by himself: had he not been prematurely snatched away, we might have been still more benefited on the subject of anatomy establishing the truths of the physiology of the brain of Gall and Spurzheim. We all admit national characteristics, and as phrenologists we find national forms of head made up of different degrees of development of individual organs: in England, Spurzheim took the English form of head as a guide to instruct Englishmen.

Gall has not published a clear view of the essential function of marvellousness; Spurzheim obtained much information in this kingdom, where the faculty is generally large, and takes a more important direction, viz. towards religion, than in France or Germany; and he modified its boundaries, from more attentively considering the convolutions of this part of the brain in connexion with external development, during his residence in this country, *though he did not change its situation.*

During life we can only approximate to truth; no phrenologist can exactly define the limits of convolutions on the exterior of the head, though practice, joined with principles, will give a facility for forming useful general data. The same map of the organs would as ill suit different heads as the proportions of the Apollo or Venus would be found to coincide with each individual of the genus man, though every healthy person has all the external and internal organs of the body relatively larger or smaller.

On the organ which Dr. E. calls

Covetiveness, he says that Spurzheim once agreed with Gall, previously asserting that the former changed the name, situation, and extent afterwards. Spurzheim did change the name of this organ, at the suggestion of the Edinburgh phrenologists*, because he considered the term Acquisitiveness expressed its essential function better than Covetiveness, which might be taken to imply bad motive. Gall, in 1818, 4to. edition, gives four names to this faculty, viz. *Sentiment de la propriété, Instinct de faire des provisions, Convoitise, Penchant au vol*; and in 1825, 8vo. edition, he adds the German terms, *Eigenthumsinn, Hang zu Stehlen*.

Spurzheim altered the situation and extent of Acquisitiveness on the marked bust, on precisely the same principle that he modified the marking of the organ of Marvellousness, viz. by corrected and amended observation of the direction and extent of the convolutions forming this organ. Dr. Elliotson appears to be ignorant of the regularity of the convolutions forming this organ, as well as of its exact place and connexion with the organs of Hope and Conscientiousness, as Gall was, ten years ago. Now to prove this accusation, I refer to the human brain*. The great fissure of Sylvius divides the lateral convolutions as far



up as Cautiousness, 12; below it is placed the convolution of Secretiveness, 7, joining Cautiousness at the

upper and back part; below and in front uniting with Alimentive-

* See note to Spurzheim's Phrenology, 3d ed. 1825, p. 165.

* The annexed engravings were made from drawings of a human brain, by my friend, A. M. Macwhinnie, Esq., of Bartholomew's Hospital, to whom I thus publicly offer my thanks.

ness(*); above this great fissure of Sylvius is a well-defined and distinct fissure, about four inches in extent (call it the fissure of Spurzheim, as he first observed and described it), taking a direction laterally downwards, and slightly inclined forwards from Firmness, 15 (externally in front of the crown of the head.) This fissure of Spurzheim separates at its sincipital extremity the convolutions of Conscientiousness, 16, and Hope, 17; the former being behind, the latter in front of it; and these two convolutions merge gradually into those of Acquisitiveness, 8, the fissure of Spurzheim now dividing that organ into two convolutions until their union at its termination, directly above the great fissure of Sylvius, about an inch from its anterior extremity. There are variations in this distance, however, as the proportions of the organs around are differently developed. I have examined attentively the convolutions of many brains during the last twelve years, at first under the direction of Spurzheim, and since his death as circumstances gave me the opportunity, and I never saw but one human brain in which there was a junction higher up, either between Hope and Conscientiousness, or between the upper part of the convolutions of Acquisitiveness, and that was only in one hemisphere. I appeal to the greatest authority, Nature, for proof of this statement, which any one may verify by stripping off the pia mater (following the direction of the large vessels is the easiest way), and tracing the course of these convolutions; indeed, their regularity is so clear and constant, that if Dr. Elliotson had ever looked for, he could not have failed in discovering them. I would also refer for further evidence to Spurzheim's published Appendix to his Anatomy of the Brain, which contains the substance of a paper read before the Royal Society of London, in May 1829, and some remarks on Sir Charles Bell's animadver-

sions on phrenology, pl. i. iii. v. and vi. To pl. i. the human brain under ordinary conditions; to pl. iii. the imperfect brain of an idiot, now in the possession of Mr. Stanley, at St. Bartholomew's Hospital Museum; and to pl. v. and vi. the brain of an orang-outang, formerly belonging to Dr. Leach, now in the Hunterian Museum at the College of Surgeons. In these plates the convolutions are numbered, viz. Acquisitiveness, 8 (Covetiveness of Gall); Hope, 17 (not admitted a fundamental faculty by Gall); Conscientiousness, 16 (also a discovery of Spurzheim, and not admitted by Gall nor by Dr. Elliotson); Secretiveness, 7 (Cunning of Dr. Elliotson); Cautiousness, 12. From my own observations, since the death of Spurzheim, on the human brain, I incline to think the convolution marked in these plates 10, is the organ of Firmness, or part of it, and can hardly agree with Spurzheim when he refers it to Self-esteem, which organ appears to me to be that marked 11 in the first plate. I have not had the opportunity of convincing myself by observation on this subject, either in the brains of ourangs or idiots, so merely throw out this suggestion to induce further attention to the fact, in order to confirm or amend the positions laid down by Spurzheim.

I have thus endeavoured to prove that Dr. Elliotson's investigations *upon the facts and inferences in question* are not very profound; shall we at once agree with him in his insinuations that Spurzheim's grounds for his discoveries were insufficient; or, as gentlemen and seekers for truth, shall we courteously respect Spurzheim's positions and principles till we prove them to be incorrect?

"Fiat justitia ruat cælum."

I am, sir,
Your obedient servant,
H. Y. HALEY HOLM.

55, Upper Norton St., Portland Place,
July 12, 1838.

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The following abstract report has, at the special desire of the Right Honourable the Governor General, been prepared from materials comprised in my general report, which was delivered to the Tea Committee, 10th October, 1836. It embraces only such matter as the latter document affords regarding the chief object of the late deputation, and leaves untouched other subjects of scarcely less interest, some of which have been since communicated to the Government and others are still in hand.

J. Mc C.

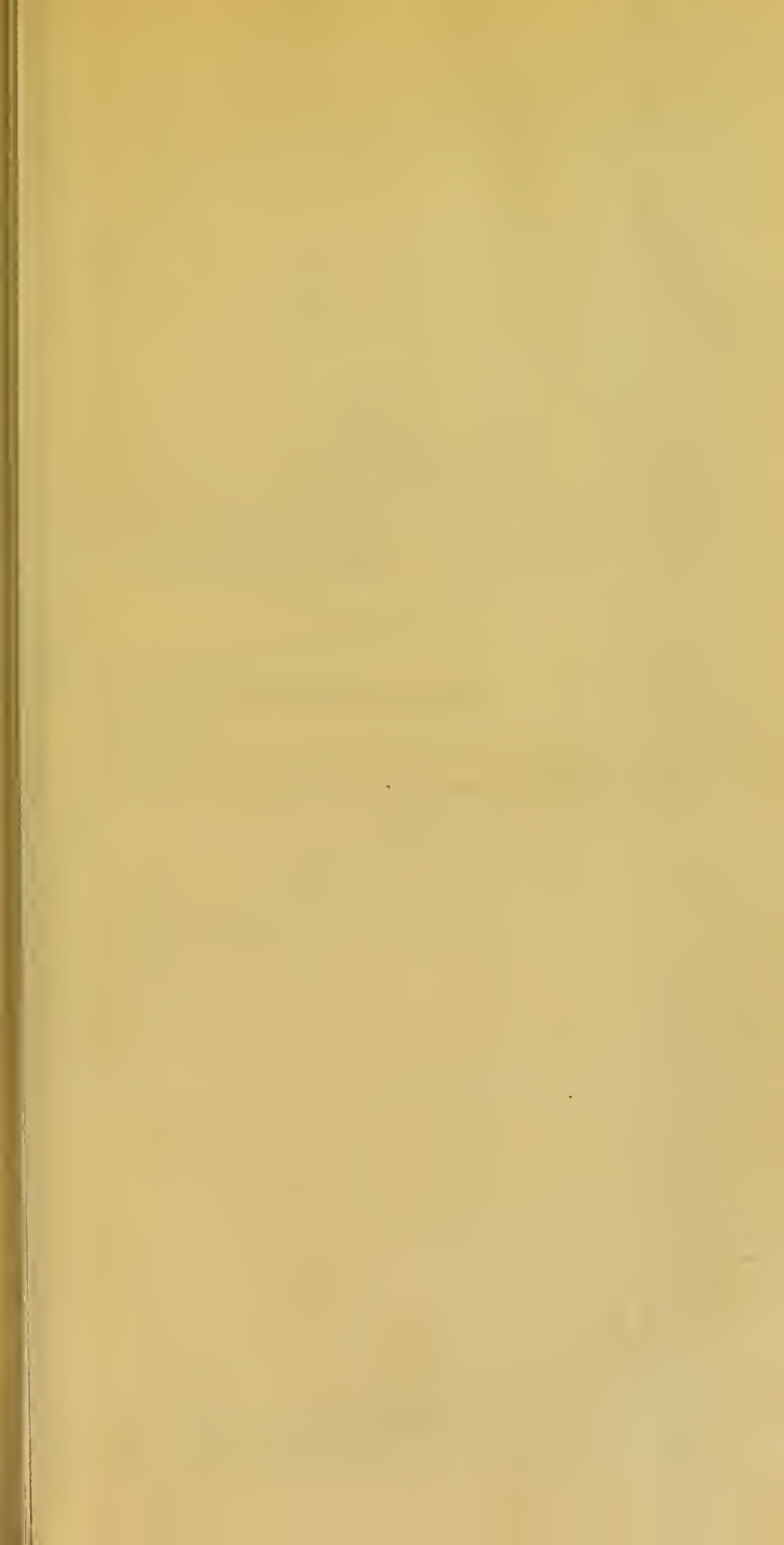
Calcutta, 5th May, 1837.

Directions to the Binder.

Plate 1 to precede the first page.

Sketch of the Cuju tea colony to face page 19.

The other drawings to be placed at the end.



H I M A L A Y A

Pl. I.

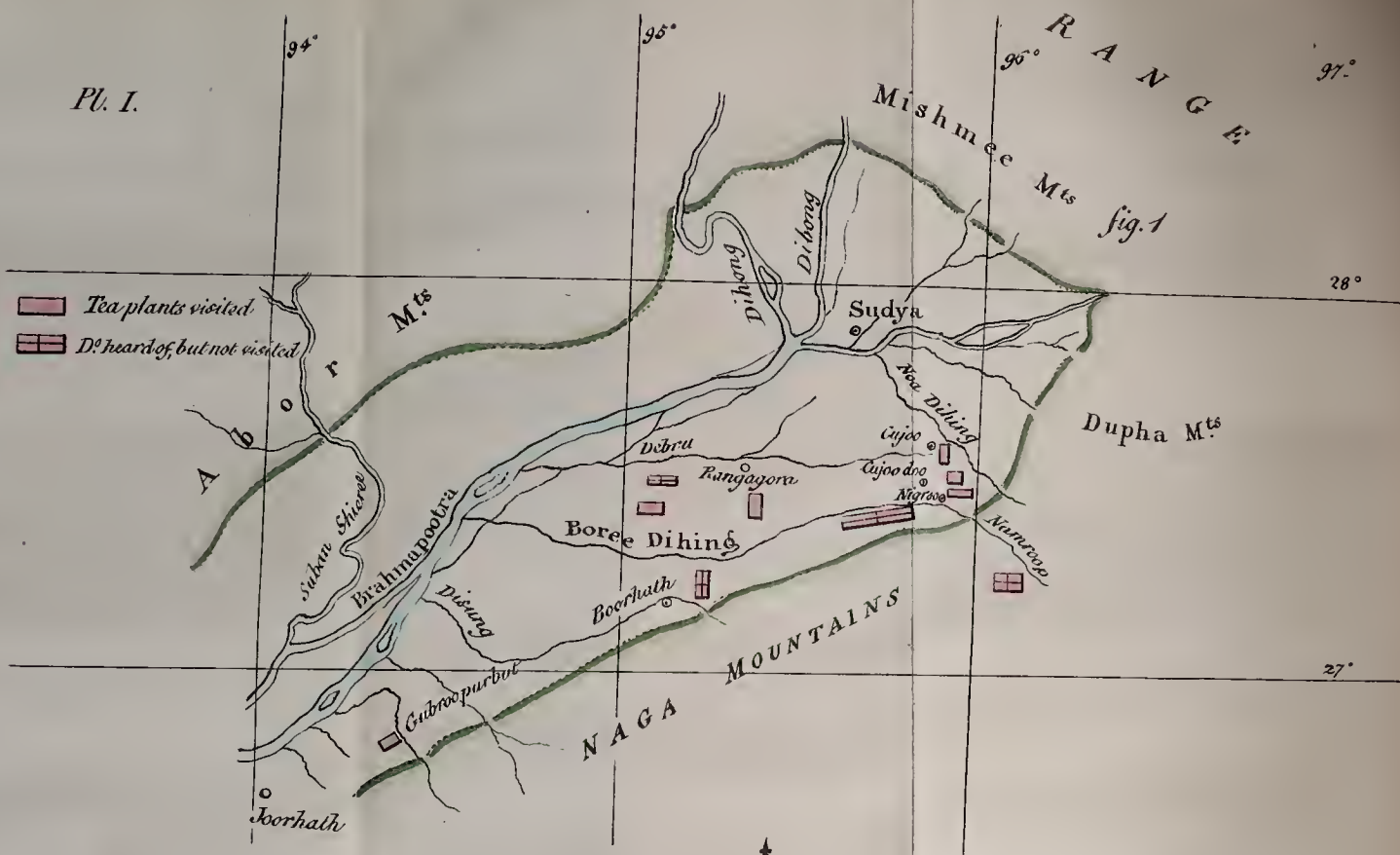
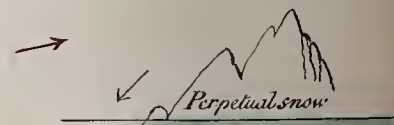


fig. 2.

Upper Assam

Alluvium - depth uncertain



Elev. about 650 f^t